

## This may hurt a little: Hypnotised patient has two teeth removed without anaesthetic

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After avoiding the dentist for the best part of a decade, Leslie Mason was in pain and knew he needed urgent treatment.

Two rotten teeth and four roots had to be removed but he could not afford to pay £400 for the work and was also dreading the discomfort he would have to endure.

He mentioned the dilemma to his friend John Ridlington, a qualified hypnotist, who revealed he had been discussing the potential of hypnosis to a dentist he knew.



Mind over matter: Dentist Bhavin Bhatt pulls Leslie Mason's teeth without anaesthetic as hypnotist John Ridlington offers moral support

A quick check confirmed Mr Mason could act as a guinea pig to test the theory and have the treatment free.

He underwent a two-hour procedure without anaesthetic, remaining conscious but in a trance-like state, and reported feeling nothing more than a 'little sting'.

He is believed to be the first person in the country to have major dental surgery using hypnosis instead of anaesthetic.

'It was incredible,' said Mr Mason, 54, a DIY store worker from Colchester, Essex.

'There is no worse pain than that inflicted by dentists but I didn't feel any. The dentist had to dig away at the rotten roots that were right up into my jaw.

'There isn't anything I wouldn't have done under hypnosis now.'

Mr Mason, a father of seven, had previously used hypnosis to quit a 40-a-day smoking habit.

He added: 'Not everyone is as susceptible as me to hypnosis but it's an area that should be exploited further. There are so many benefits.'



Guinea pig: Mr Mason couldn't afford the £400 private cost

Mr Mason's last visit to a dentist before the recent check-up had been in 1998.

During the operation on May 20 he had two upper right molars removed along with their roots, plus two roots from teeth which had been pulled in the 1980s.

Mr Ridlington spent 45 minutes getting him into a relaxed state of mind beforehand by making him visualise his favourite subject - historic battle reenactments - to distract his mind from the pain.

Mr Mason also had to imagine a dial numbered one to ten, one representing no pain and ten pure agony. Whenever he felt a twinge, he mentally turned the dial back to one.

Mr Ridlington, 59, from Dunmow, Essex, said: 'We all have the ability to control pain with our brains.

'They control everything about our bodies and our subconscious is the most powerful part - it controls our breathing and the blood pumping through our veins.

'Hypnosis taps into the subconscious mind. It's all about mind over matter.'

The operation was performed by Dr Bhavin Bhatt, who runs the Smile and Wellbeing dental practice in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire.

He said: 'The hypnosis was 100 per cent effective. We're now exploring the possibility of offering tooth transplants under hypnosis.'

Studies have shown that using hypnosis instead of anaesthetic can reduce recovery time after surgery.

It also removes the chance of possible side-effects from anaesthesia.

But the technique's long association with stage acts has kept it at the margins of mainstream medicine.

Hypnoanaesthesia, where the patient enters a deep trance state and is told he will feel no pain, has been used to help burn victims manage their agony and ease fears over surgery and childbirth.

The British Society of Medical and Dental Hypnosis said that even heart operations had been carried out under hypnosis.

In April, hypnotherapist Alex Lenkei had an 83-minute operation without anaesthetic on his arm to treat osteoarthritis.

Afterwards, he revealed he had been aware of his surgeon making a four-inch incision into his wrist and chiselling the bone to remove a tendon.

He added: 'I heard everything he was saying to his assistants and anaesthetist but there was no gossip. It was a shame - I was hoping to hear something juicy.'